

# STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 69

16p



## NIGHTMARE PLANET

# STARBLAZER



VOLKANITE — THE PRODUCT OF PRIMEVAL VOLCANIC FORCES, AND A VITAL FUEL FOR THE VAST ENERGY CONSUMING SPACECRAFT OF THE TERRAN FORMATION. VOLKANITE WAS FOUND ONLY ON PLANETS IN A PRIMITIVE STAGE OF EVOLUTION FAR OUT IN THE EERIE SILENCE OF UNCHARTED SPACE. THE MEN WHO COLLECTED THIS FUEL WERE HARD LIVING MEN WHO PLAYED FOR HIGH STAKES. THE STAKES WERE HIGHEST — LIFE — ON THE NIGHTMARE PLANET.

# NIGHTMARE PLANET



THE ONLY RULE WAS FIRST COME FIRST SERVED. AS THE VOLCANOES BELCHED THEIR MOLTEN INNARDS SKYWARDS, A HUNDRED SENSORS SCANNED THE FOUNTAINS OF DEATH FOR TRACES OF THE MOLTEN VOLKANITE.

'HAWK' HAWKINS AND HIS PARTNER, SILVA, HAD BEEN WEEKS HUNTING THE VOLKANITE.

I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THIS PLANET'S PLAYED OUT, SILVA.

COULD BE! THE PICKINGS ARE GETTING SMALLER ALL THE TIME.



HOLD IT! THERE'S A JET ON RED ZERO FIVE!

GOT IT! ENERGY NET ACTIVATED!  
GUN CREWS READY FOR BLASTING  
THROUGH TO OUR PAY PACKET!



BEFORE ANY OF THE RIVAL SHIPS COULD TURN, HAWK WAS THUNDERING ACROSS THE PLANET.

WE'VE ONLY GOT FIFTEEN SECONDS  
SO LET'S MAKE THIS A GOOD  
RUN!

JUST GET US THERE FIRST  
AND WE'LL DO THE REST!

ALL SHIPS STAY CLEAR.  
I HAVE FIRST CLAIM HERE!

YOU CAN CLAIM IT WHEN YOU'VE  
GOT IT, HAWKINS, AND YOU  
HAVEN'T GOT IT YET!

AS HAWK HURTLED AT THE VOLCANO HIS CREW FIRED THEIR DEFLECTOR GUNS PUSHING THE ERUPTING LAVA ASIDE TO EXPOSE THE THIN JET OF VOLKANITE.

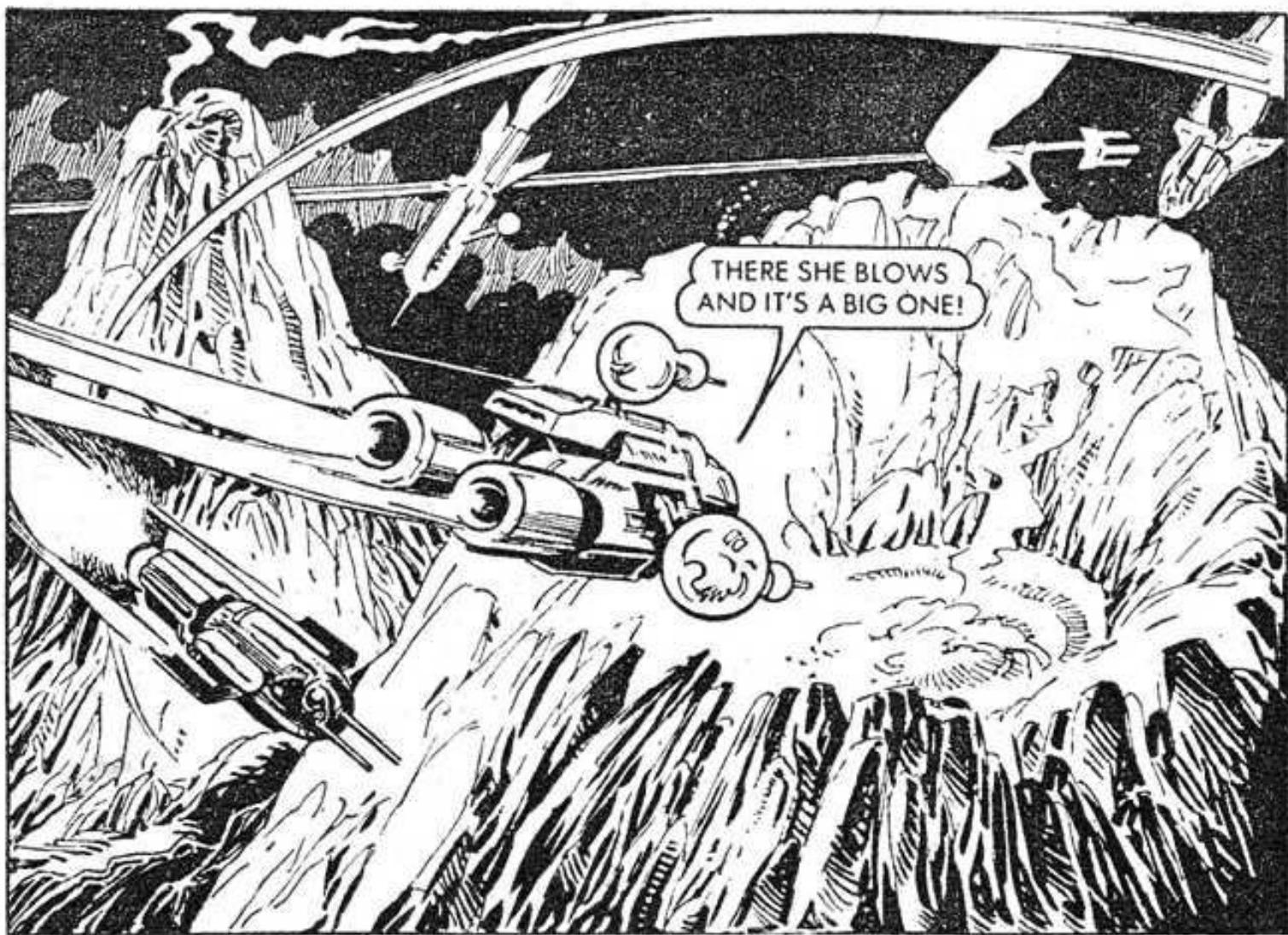


COME ROUND FOR ANOTHER RUN. I THINK SHE'S  
GOING TO BLOW SOME MORE VOLKANITE.

7



THERE SHE BLOWS  
AND IT'S A BIG ONE!





THE GUN FINS CRUSHED INTO THE MOUNTAIN.



SUPERB REFLEXES AND BRUTE STRENGTH STEERED THE CRIPPLED STARSHIP TO SAFETY.

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THE POWER UNITS ARE INTACT.  
C'MON, YOU TIN CRATE—GET UP THERE.



YOU MURDERING SLOB, BRAKKO.  
YOU DID THAT DELIBERATELY.  
YOU'VE KILLED TEN OF MY CREW!

I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS. I'LL SEE YOU  
ROTTING IN A FEDERATION PRISON.

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT AND YOU  
CAN'T PROVE OTHERWISE!

IT'S A TOUGH BUSINESS, HAWKINS, IF  
YOU DON'T LIKE THE HEAT—STAY OUT  
OF THE FIRE!



WE'D BETTER MAKE FOR ARCOS AND GET  
REPAIRED. THE VOLKANITE WE'VE ALREADY GOT  
SHOULD JUST ABOUT PAY FOR IT.

GETTING A REPLACEMENT CREW'S  
GOING TO BE THE HARD BIT.



THEY BEGAN THE LONG WARP BACK TO THE FRONTIER PLANET, ARCOS.



ONE THIRD SPEED ONLY, SILVA, WE'VE SUFFERED TOO MUCH  
DAMAGE FOR MAXIMUM WARP.

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS CRASH AND THE SPACERS WERE HURLED TO THE FLOOR.



HELL'S FANGS!  
WHAT WAS THAT?



WE'VE COLLIDED WITH SOMETHING,  
CAPTAIN. THE DEFLECTOR SHIELDS ARE  
DEFECTIVE.

GET VAC-SUITS! SILVA AND  
I ARE GOING SPACESIDE!

ONCE OUTSIDE—

LOOKS LIKE PART  
OF AN OLD MINING SHIP.

IT'S THE CONTROL CONSOLE. LET'S  
GET ABOARD AND FIND OUT WHAT IT IS.

NO SURVIVORS FROM THIS. IT'S BEEN  
WRECKED FOR A FEW YEARS I'D SAY.

I'LL TAKE THE NAVIGATION LOG—THAT  
SHOULD TELL US WHAT HAPPENED AND  
WHO IT IS.

THE NAVLOG WAS PUT IN A REPLAY MACHINE.

HELL'S FANGS! THAT SHIP WAS THE  
'DORADO'—IT BELONGED TO KYCHEK  
JONES!

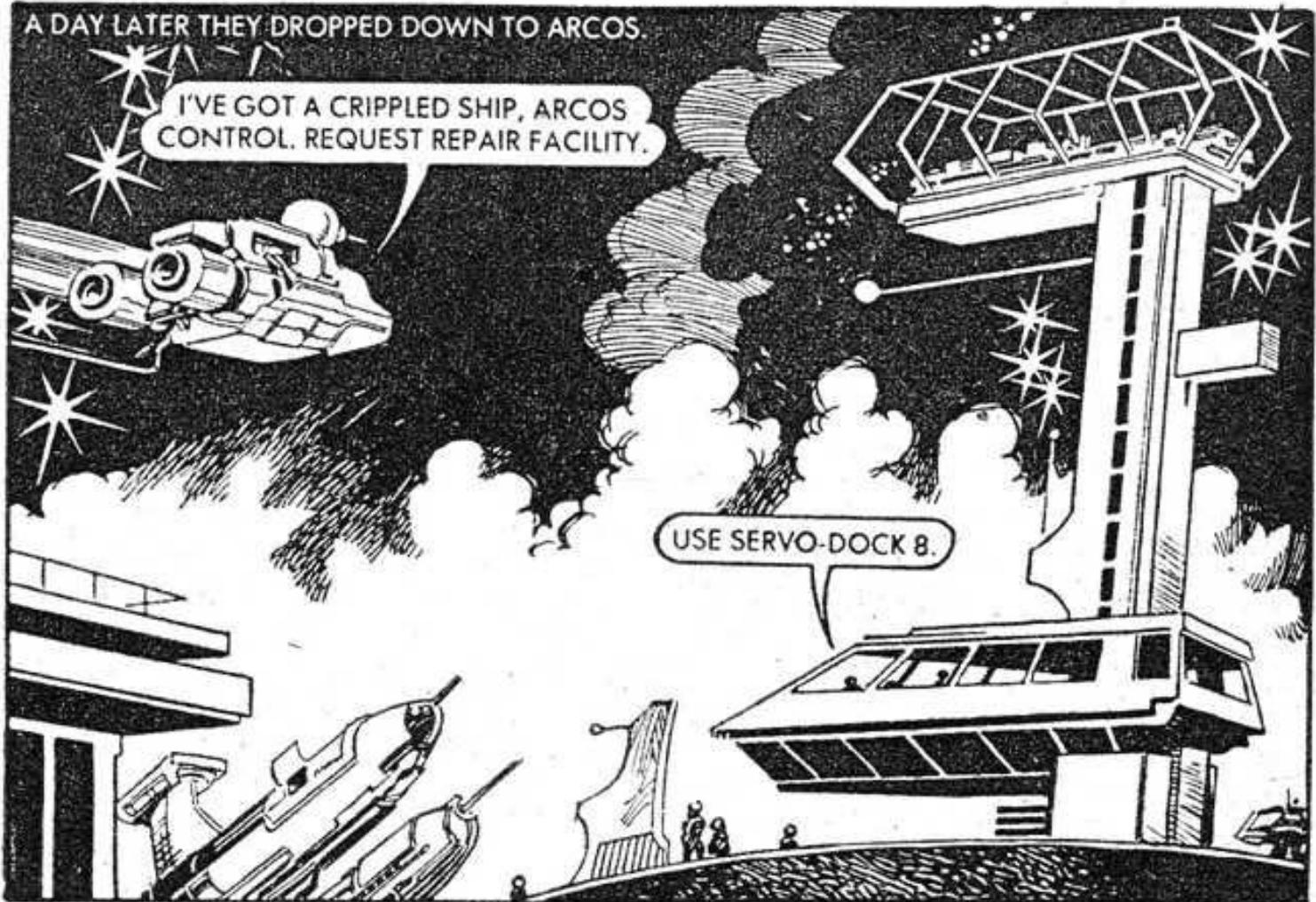
HE FOUND THE RICHEST EVER SOURCE  
OF VOLKANITE THEN DISAPPEARED  
YEARS BACK, TAKING THE SECRET OF  
IT WITH HIM.

HE HAD AN ACCIDENT DURING HYPER-WARP, HIS  
CARGO OF VOLKANITE DESTABILISED AND TOOK  
MOST OF THE SHIP WITH IT IN ONE BIG BANG.

BUT THIS NAV LOG'S GOT ALL THE DATA ON HOW TO  
FIND HIS MINES—SPACE CO-ORDINATES, WARP TIMES.  
IT'S THE KEY TO THE GREATEST FORTUNE IN THE  
GALAXY.)



A DAY LATER THEY DROPPED DOWN TO ARCOS.



THEY RECKON IT'LL TAKE ABOUT A WEEK TO REPAIR  
AND THAT'S HOW LONG WE'VE GOT TO FIND A  
REPLACEMENT CREW.



LEAVE THAT TO ME, SIR. I  
KNOW JUST THE MEN WE NEED.

I WANT RELIABLE MEN, SLIGE. NONE  
OF THE SPACE SCUM THAT HAUNT THIS PLACE.

AT LAST ALL WAS READY AND HAWK WENT ON A TOUR OF INSPECTION.

SILVA! COME AND LOOK AT THIS!

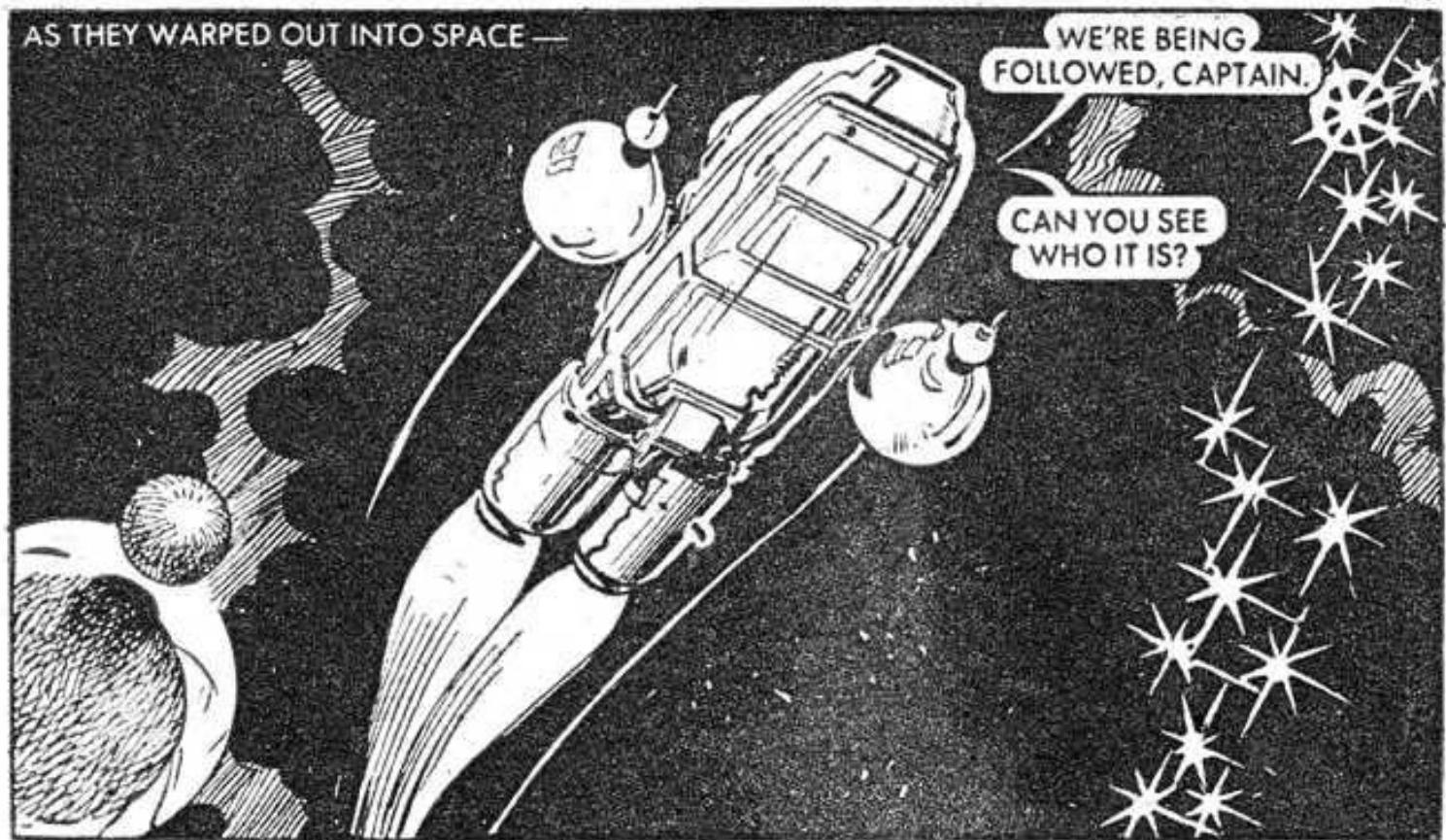
SOMEONE'S BEEN GIVING THE PLACE A THOROUGH GOING OVER. I BET THEY'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE NAV LOG.

THEN THEY KNOW ABOUT THE VOLKANITE!

AS THEY WARPED OUT INTO SPACE —

WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED, CAPTAIN.

CAN YOU SEE WHO IT IS?



IT'S BRAKKO! HE MUST HAVE RETURNED TO SELL HIS PICKINGS WHILE WE WERE UNDER REPAIR.

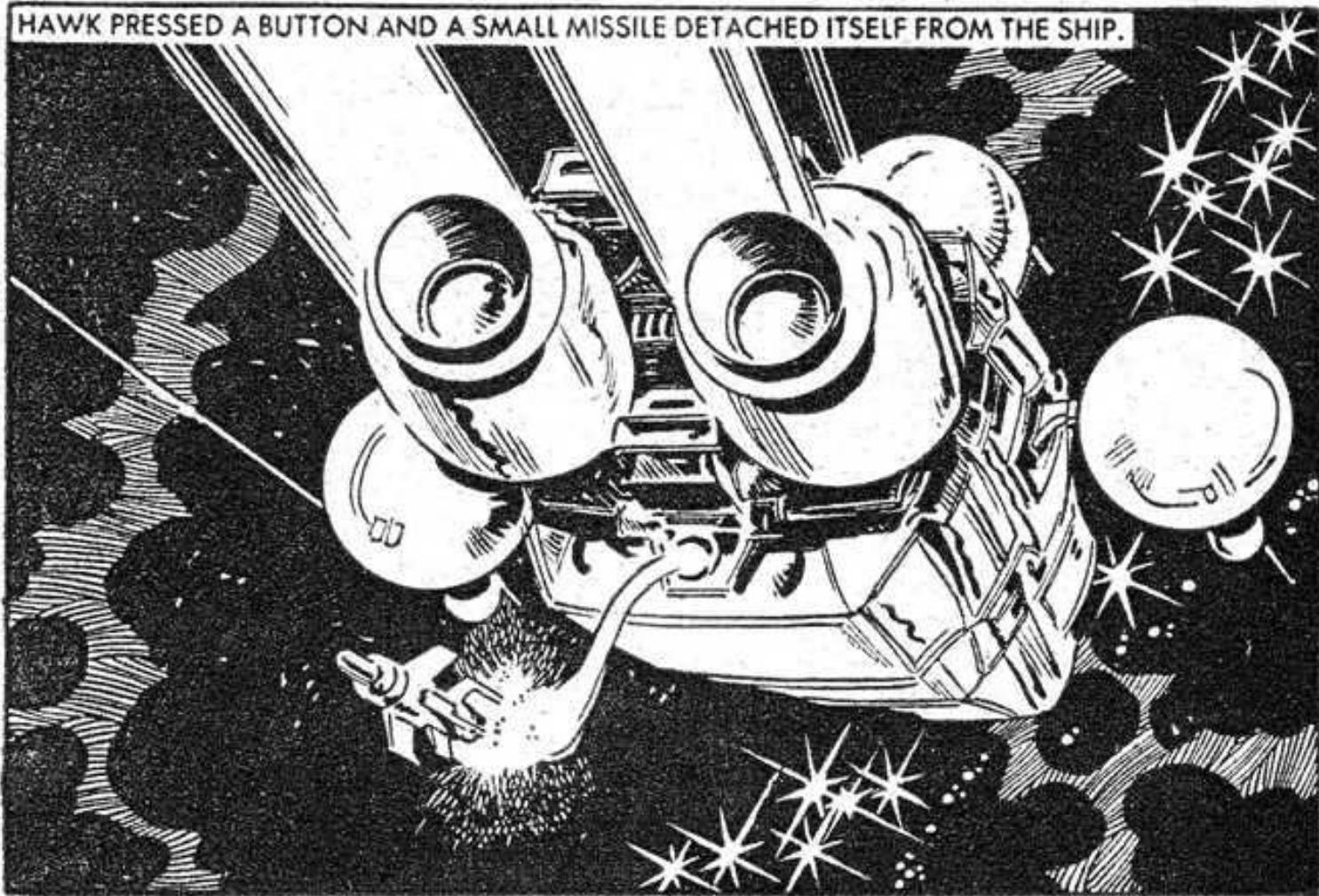
HE'S DEFINITELY TRAILING US.  
I WONDER WHO TIPPED HIM OFF?



I THOUGHT SOMETHING LIKE THIS MIGHT HAPPEN. SO I HAD A LITTLE DEVICE FITTED. FEED THE CO-ORDINATES INTO THE WARP-JUMP CONTROLS AND GO WHEN I GIVE THE WORD.



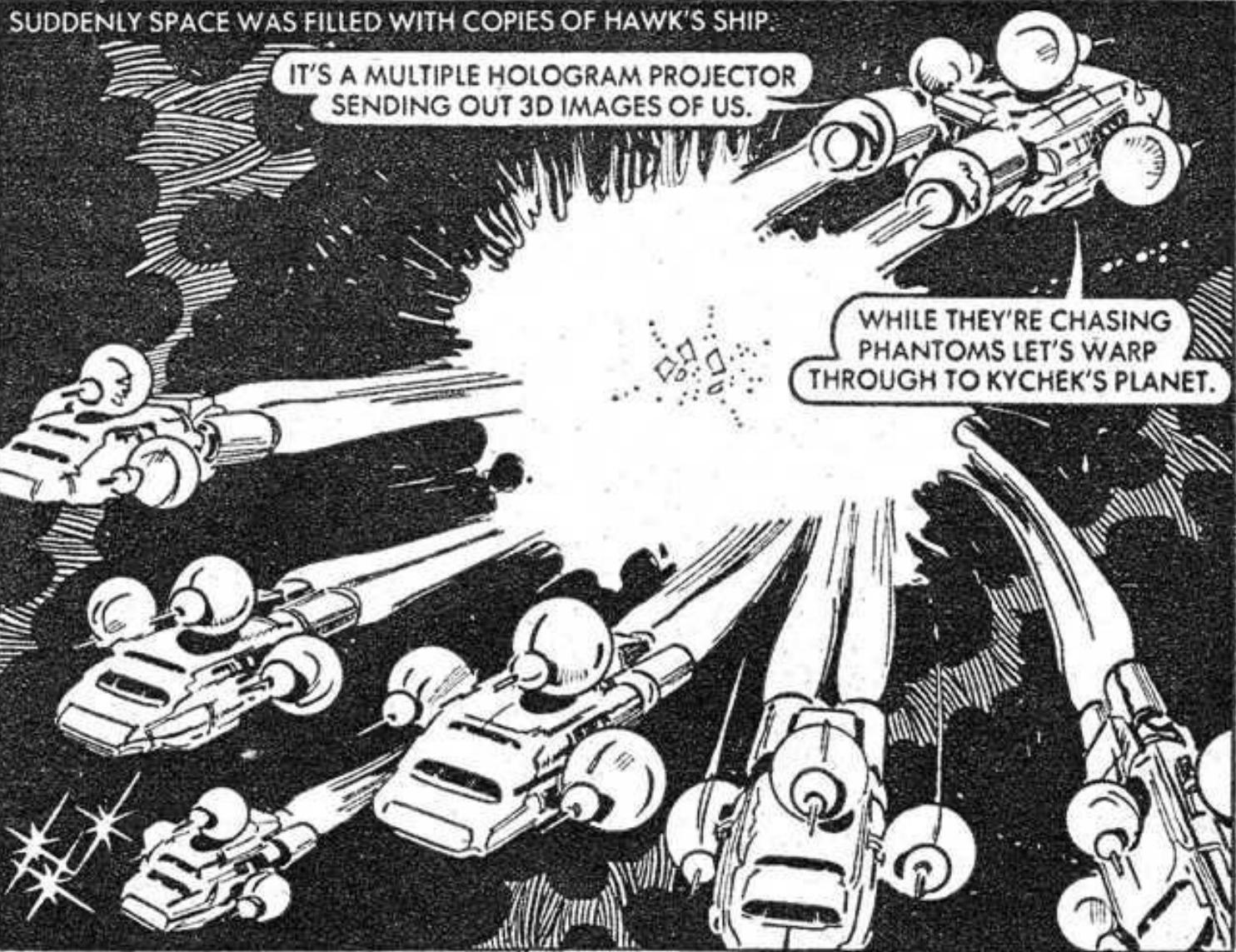
HAWK PRESSED A BUTTON AND A SMALL MISSILE DETACHED ITSELF FROM THE SHIP.



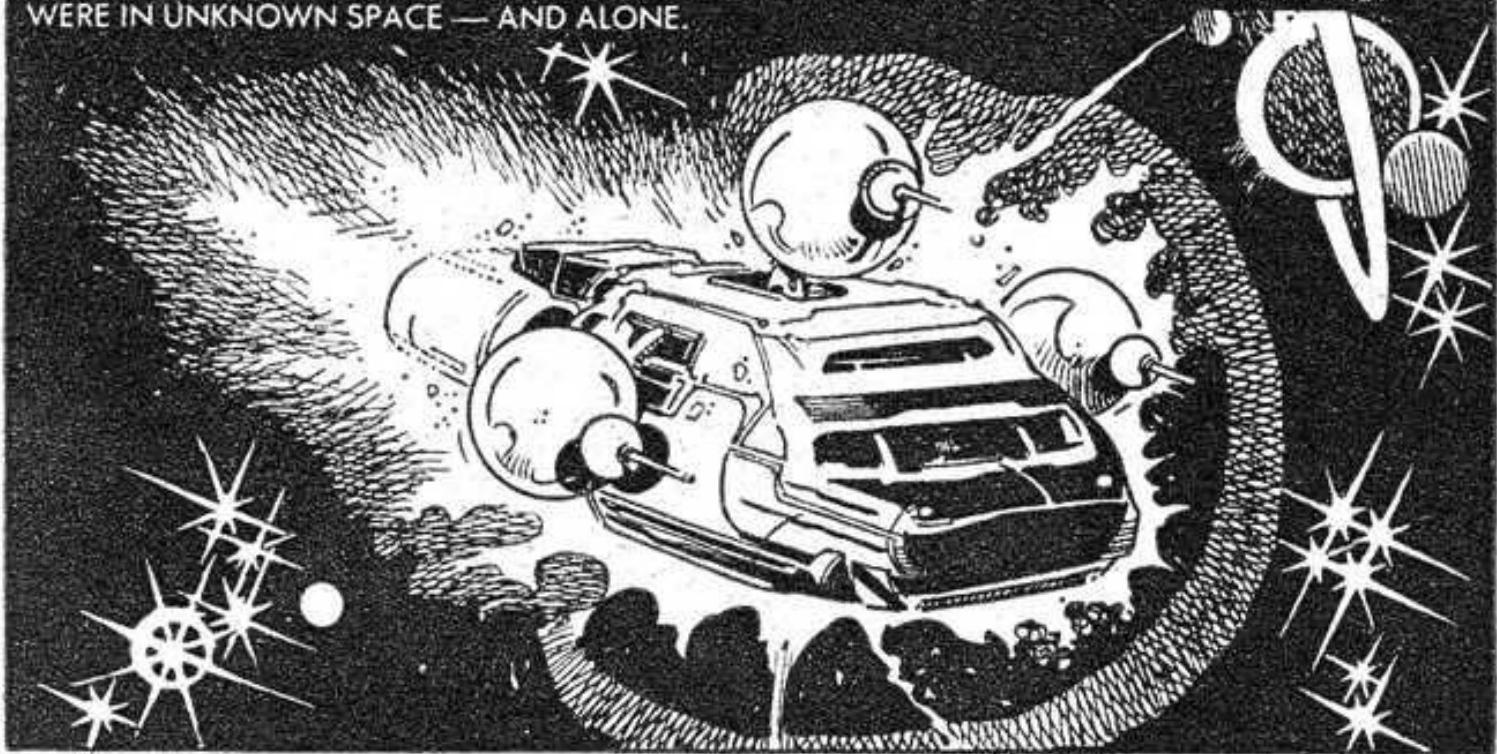
SUDDENLY SPACE WAS FILLED WITH COPIES OF HAWK'S SHIP.

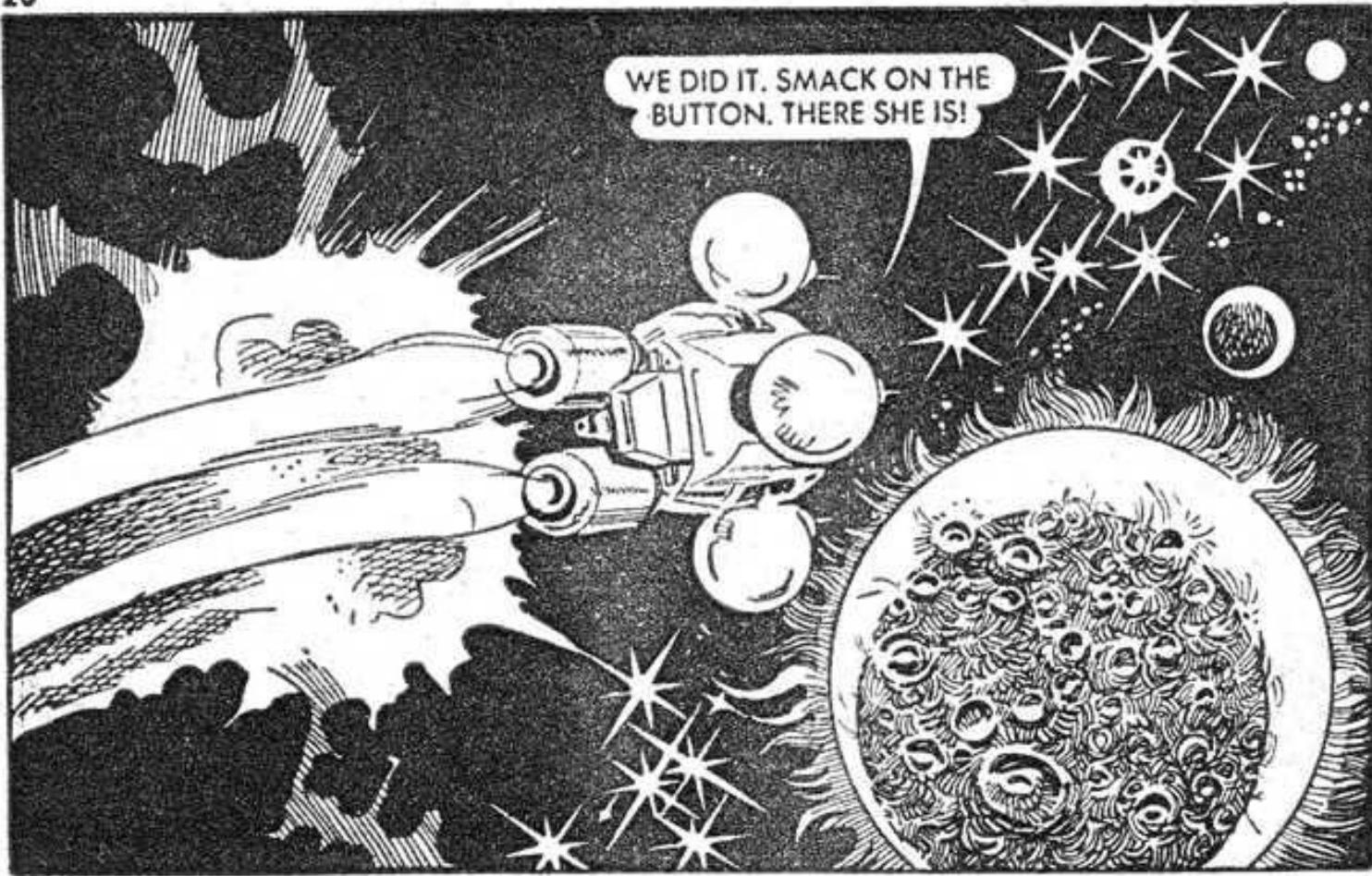
IT'S A MULTIPLE HOLOGRAM PROJECTOR  
SENDING OUT 3D IMAGES OF US.

WHILE THEY'RE CHASING  
PHANTOMS LET'S WARP  
THROUGH TO KYCHEK'S PLANET.



SILVA HIT THE CONTROLS. THE SHIP SHUDDERED WITH UNLEASHED POWER AND THEN THEY WERE IN UNKNOWN SPACE — AND ALONE.









ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW BEFORE I VAPOURISE YOU?

I SUPPOSE BRAKKO SUPPLIED THE REPLACEMENT CREW AND PROMISED YOU ALL EQUAL SHARES IN THE FIND?

THEN THE ONLY THING I CAN DO IS THIS.

HAWK FLIPPED THE SWITCH AND THE NEXT SECOND THE CREW WERE FLOATING IN AIR AS THE GRAVITY FIELD COLLAPSED.

I READ YOU.

C'MON, SILVA.

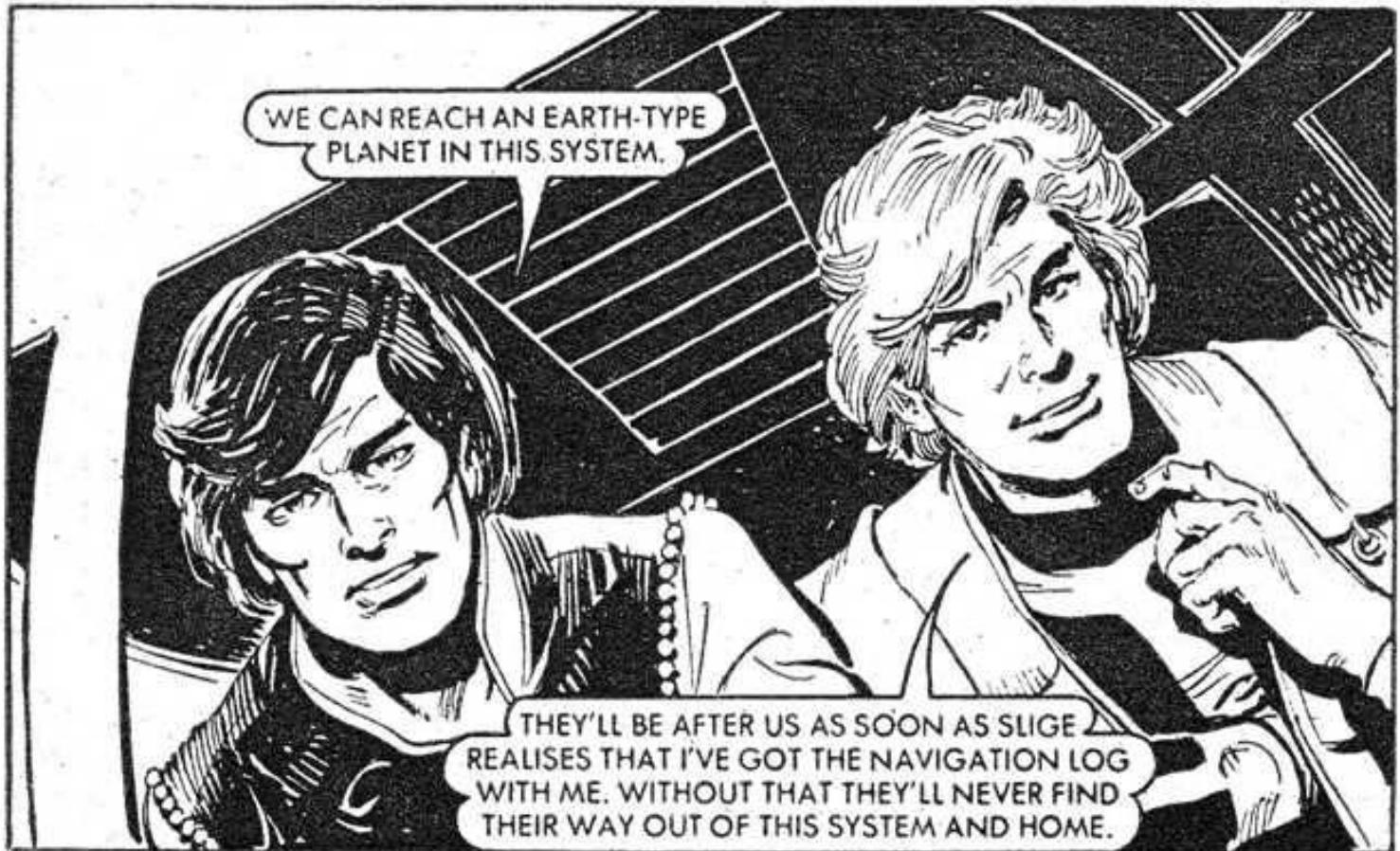
THE TWO SPACERS KICKED HARD AGAINST A PANEL AND SHOT THROUGH THE AIR STRAIGHT AT THE STARTLED CREW.





THE ESCAPE CHUTES LED DIRECTLY INTO THE SHIP'S LIFEBOATS.





THEY BLURRED THE STARS UNTIL AT LAST THEY SIGHTED THE EARTH-TYPE PLANET.

ACCORDING TO KYCHEK'S LOG IT'S IN PRIMORDIAL DEVELOPMENT STAGE AND UNINHABITED.

WE'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH POWER LEFT FOR A FIRST-TIME LANDING ... SO MAKE IT A GOOD ONE.

THERE'S A GOOD SPOT TO LAND.

WE'VE GOT POWER FADE.  
WE'RE GOING TO CRASH.

HAWK HEAVED DESPERATELY AT THE CONTROLS BUT THE SMALL SHIP PLUMMETED SIDEWAYS CRASHING INTO A CLUMP OF SPONGY TRUNKS.



THE TRUNKS CUSHIONED THE FORCE OF THE CRASH LEAVING THEM BRUISED BUT INTACT.



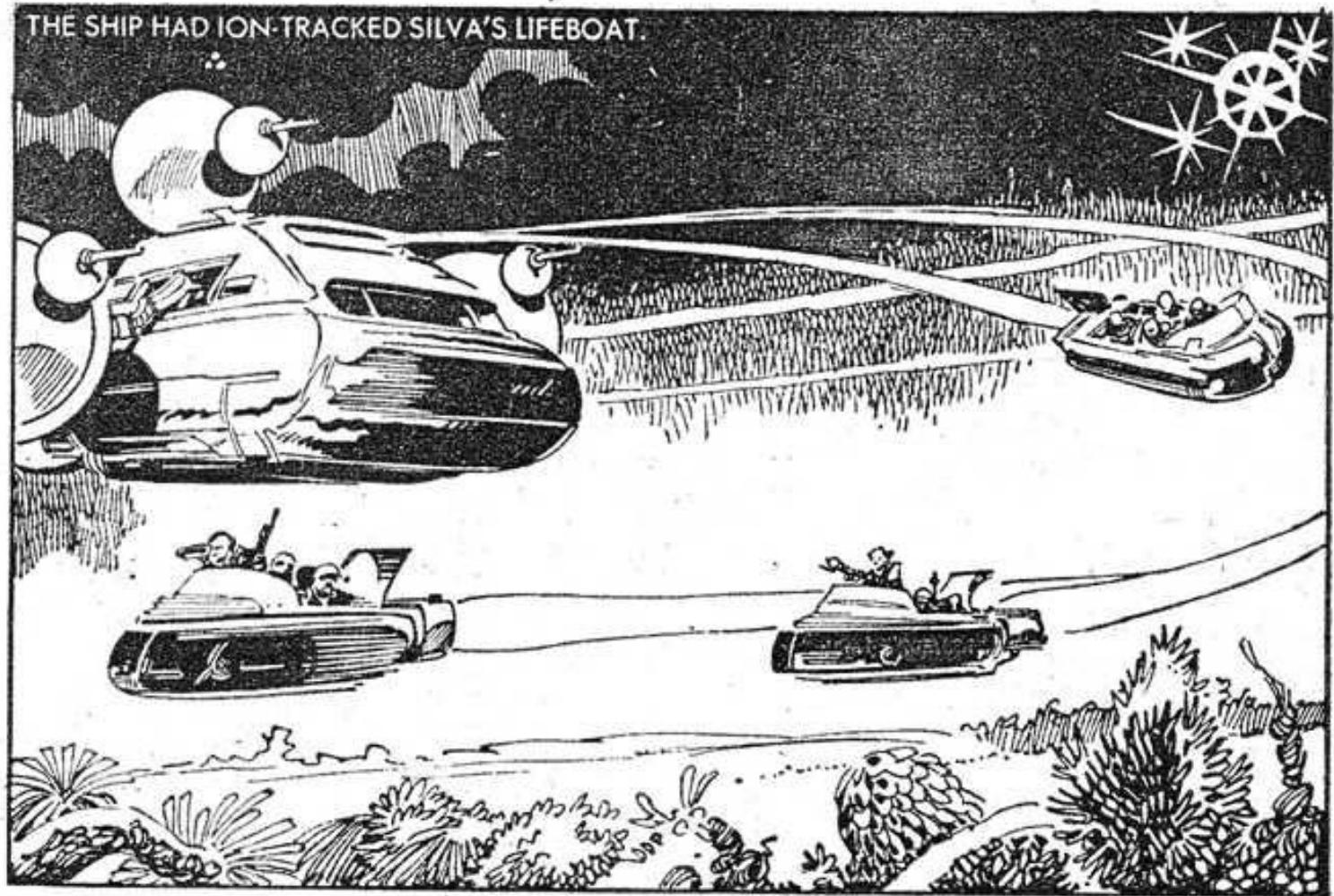
NO! DON'T TOUCH THE TRUNK.







THE SHIP HAD ION-TRACKED SILVA'S LIFEBOAT.







I'VE GOT A FIX ON 'EM.  
THEY'VE STOPPED UP AHEAD.



WE'LL HAVE TO BACKTRACK.  
THERE'S NO WAY THROUGH THIS LOT.

TOO LATE, HAWK.  
WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED!





BEFORE CARLOZ COULD MOVE THE DRIVER WAS ENVELOPED IN AN EXPLOSION OF ELECTRICAL ENERGY.







THEY PRESSED ON UNTIL DARKNESS BEGAN TO FALL.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET BACK  
TO THE SHIP TONIGHT, CARLOZ.

WE'LL STOP HERE FOR THE NIGHT.  
TIE THEM TO THOSE TREES.

SLEEP WELL, HAWKINS.  
WAKE ME UP WHEN IT'S MORNING.

THIS GRASS IS REAL LUXURY. IT'S  
SOFTER THAN A GRAVITY MATTRESS!

WITH NIGHT CAME A TOTAL  
SILENCE, BROKEN ONLY BY THE  
EERIE NOISES OF PROWLING  
ANIMALS.

AS THE PALE, TRIPLE-SUNNED DAWN BROKE.

HAWK! WAKE UP! JUPE—LOOK AT THE  
GRASS!

WH-WHAT?



IT'S GROWN INTO THEIR BODIES AND  
SUCCDED THEM DRY OF ALL THE FLUIDS.

VAMPIRE GRASS! IT MUST HAVE  
ANAESTHETISED THEM FIRST.







SUDDENLY—

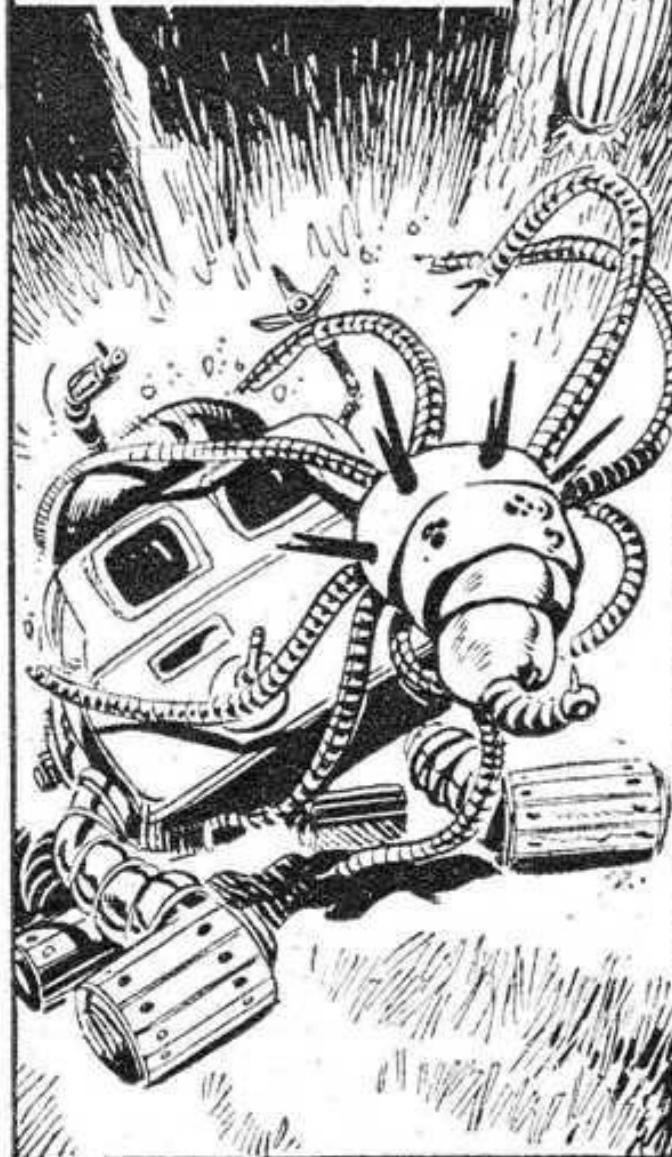


THORB'S BLOOD! WHO'S THAT?

YOU MEAN WHAT IS IT!

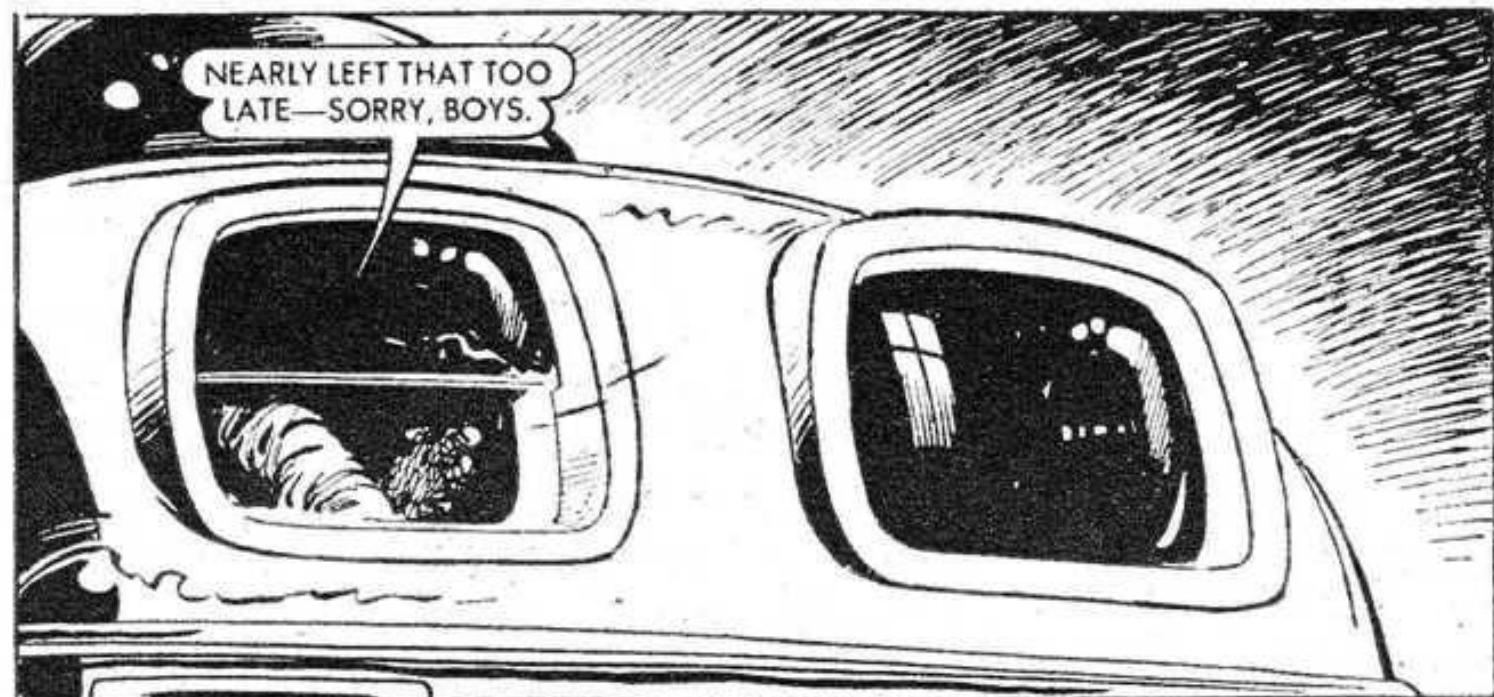


THE WORM CREATURE WRAPPED ITSELF AROUND THE STRANGE VEHICLE.



THE VEHICLE BLASTED THE CARNIVOROUS WORM.

NEARLY LEFT THAT TOO LATE—SORRY, BOYS.



AN OLD PROSPECTOR CLAMBERED OUT OF THE CRAFT.

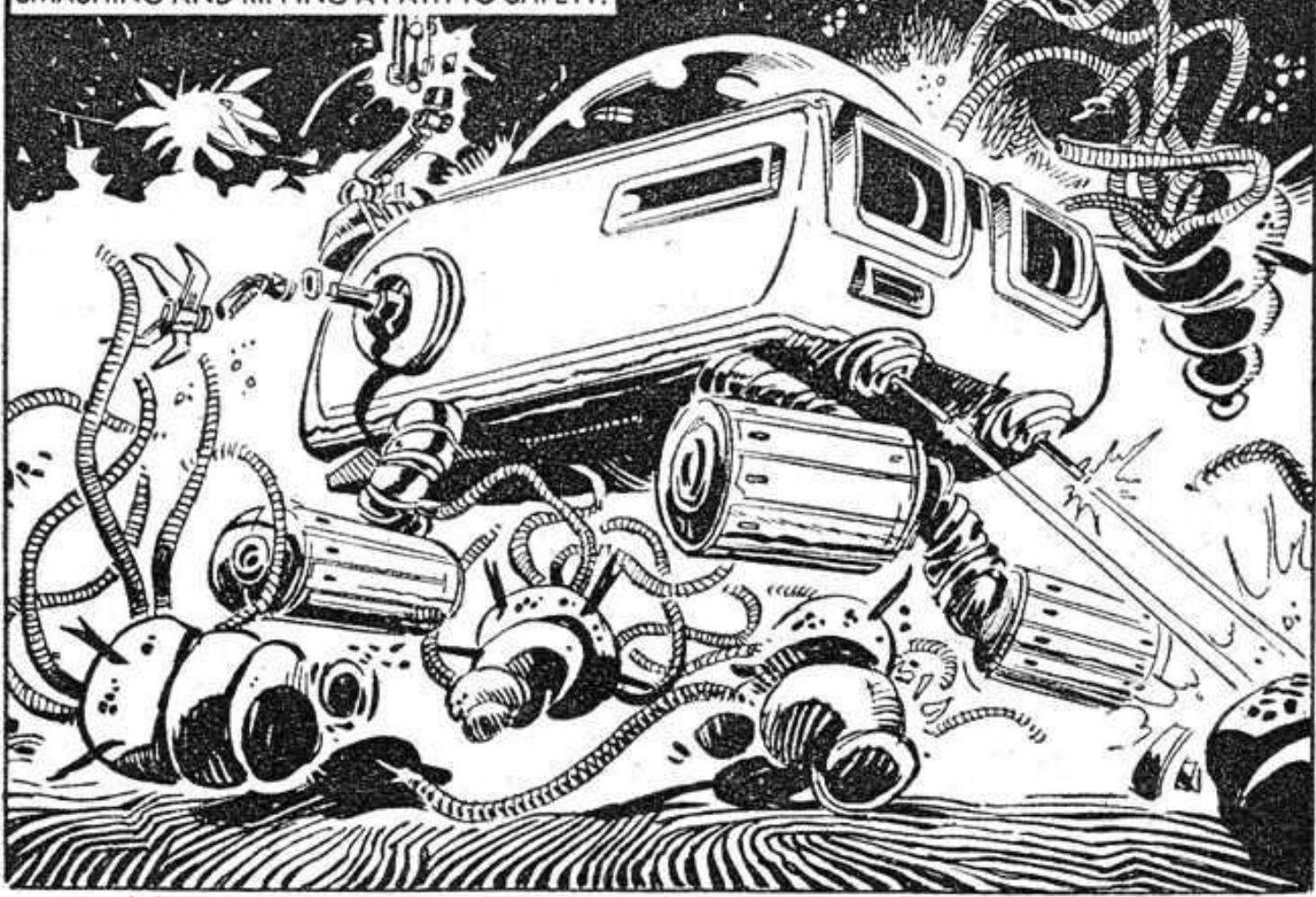


THORBAT IS MY "PET!" BY THE WAY  
MY NAME'S GUNNAR. I'M ALL THAT'S LEFT OF KYCHEK JONES' BASE CAMP CREW.

KYCHEK JONES HAS  
A BASE HERE?



GUNNAR THREW THE LAND MOBILE INTO TOP POWER AND CRUSHED INTO THE SWARM SMASHING AND RIPPING A PATH TO SAFETY.



HAWK EXPLAINED THEIR PLIGHT TO GUNNAR.

WITH YOUR HELP AND WEAPONS  
FROM YOUR DEPOT WE COULD GET  
MY SHIP BACK AND GET OUT OF  
THIS NIGHTMARE.

I'M WITH YOU, BUT THERE'S A  
PROBLEM GETTING AT OUR  
WEAPONS AND STORES. I'LL EXPLAIN  
WHEN WE GET THERE.



SOME HOURS LATER . . .



AS THE VEHICLE CLIMBED  
THE ROCKFACE—



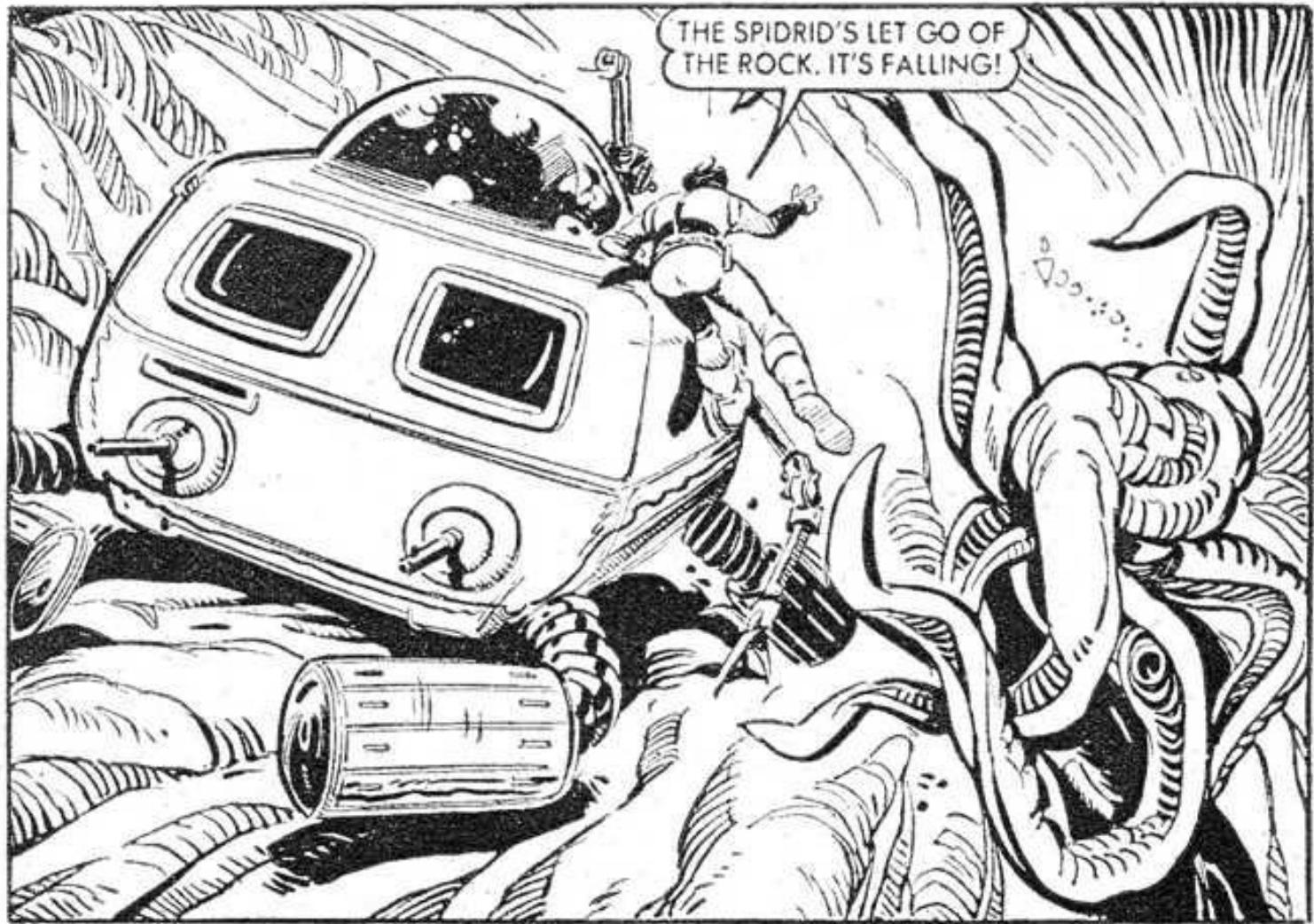






THE CREATURES DEFENCE MECHANISMS CONCENTRATED ON AVOIDING THE PAIN.





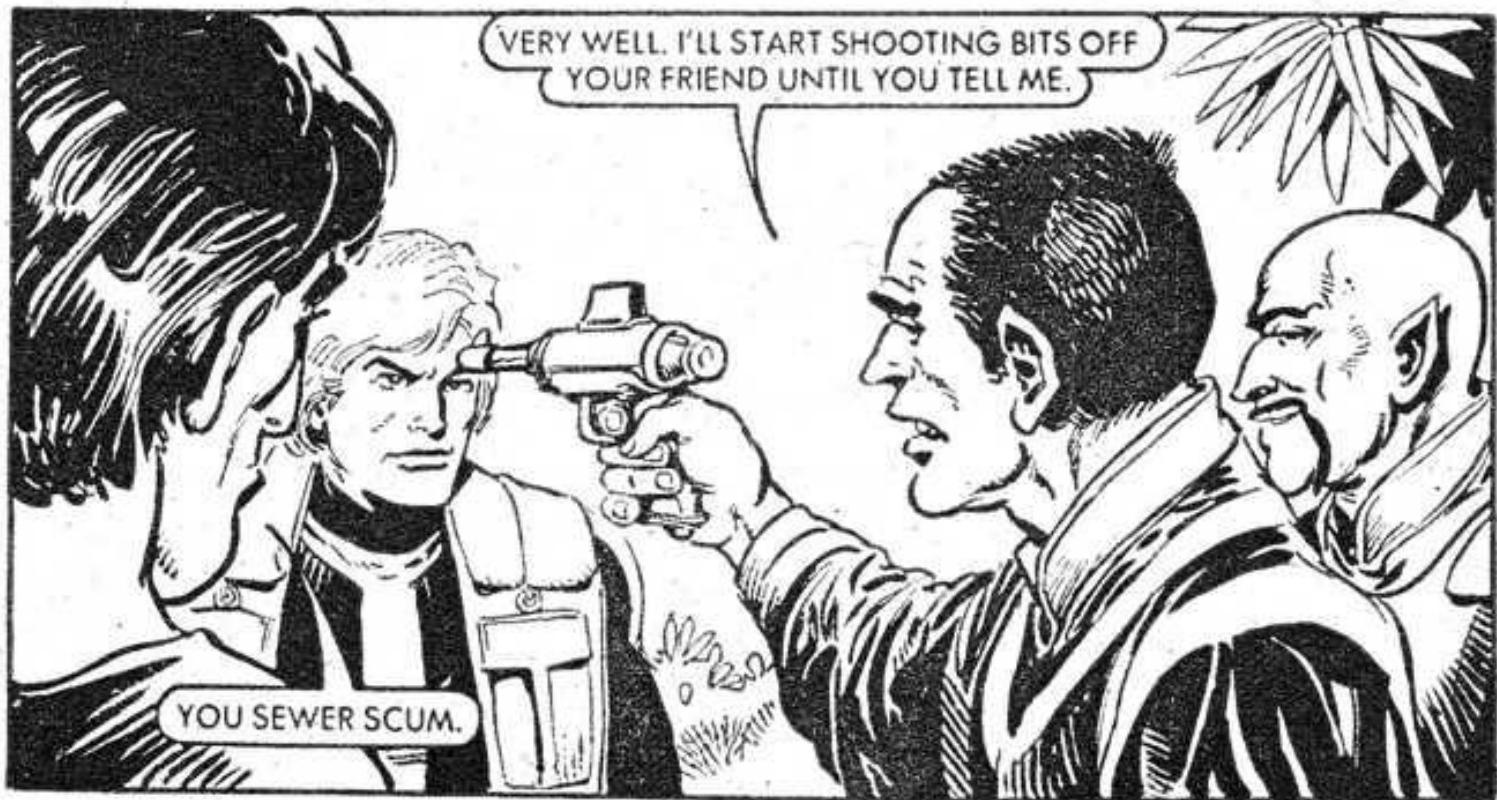
AS THE VEHICLE CLEARED THE TREES LASER FIRE LASHED OUT.



MEET SLIGE, GUNNAR.

DON'T KILL THEM! I'VE A FEW QUESTIONS TO ASK THEM FIRST!







GUNNAR LED SLIGE TO A LINE OF CONTAINERS.

KYCHEK JONES USED THIS DEPOT TO PROCESS AND STORE VOLKANITE. THESE ARE ATOMIC COMPRESSORS. EACH CYLINDER CONTAINS TEN TIMES ITS VOLUME IN VOLKANITE—AND THEY MAGNETICALLY ATTACH TO A SPACESHIP'S HULL.



GET THOSE CONTAINERS LOADED AS FAST AS YOU CAN.





THEY RUSHED INTO THE DARKENED BUILDING . . .



INSIDE THE BUILDING WAS A HIVE OF DEADLY PIRANHA  
WASPS—THEIR SOLE DESIRE TO FEED ON THE MEN!





THE TRIO RACED TO THE SHIP—

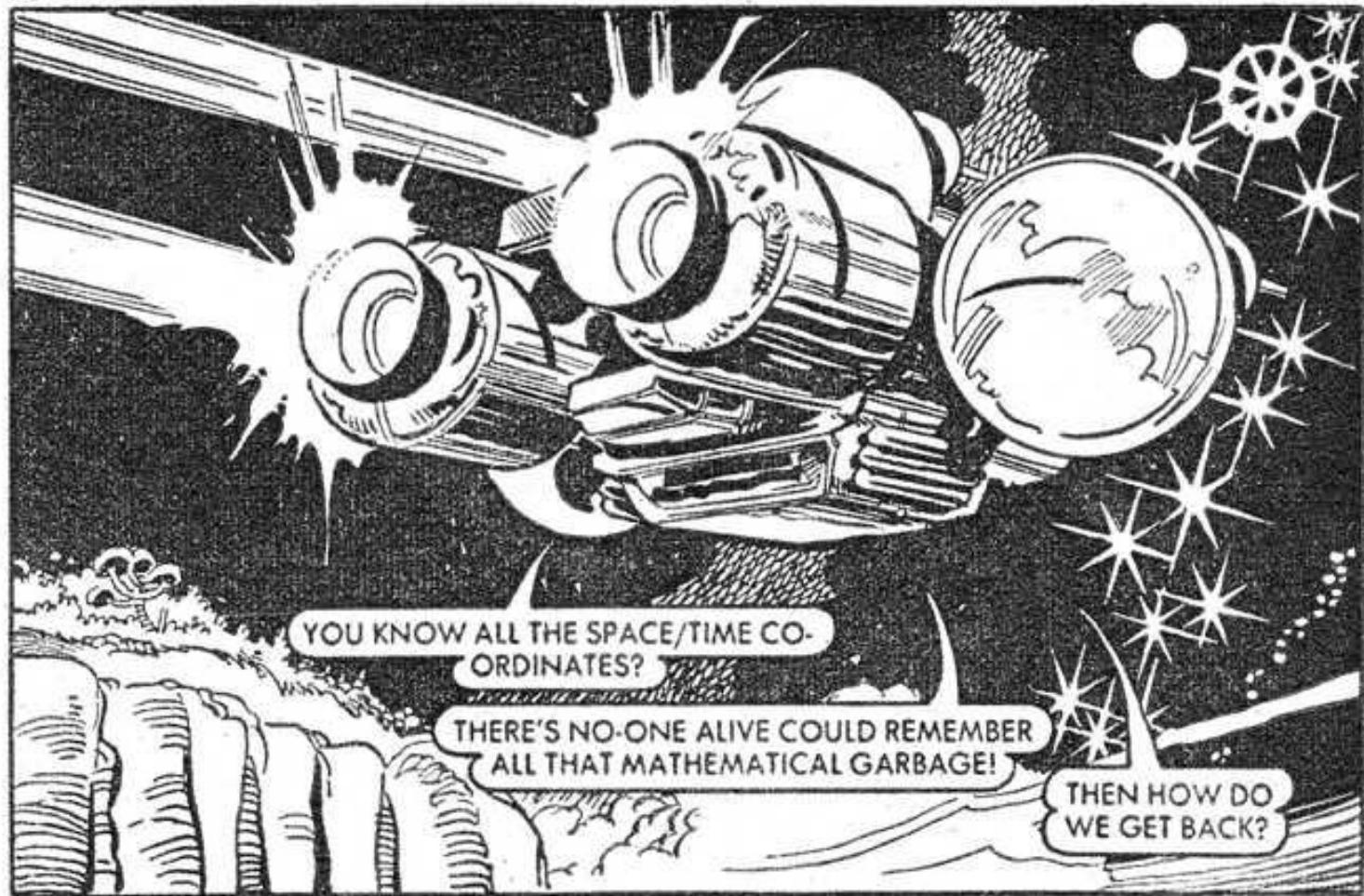


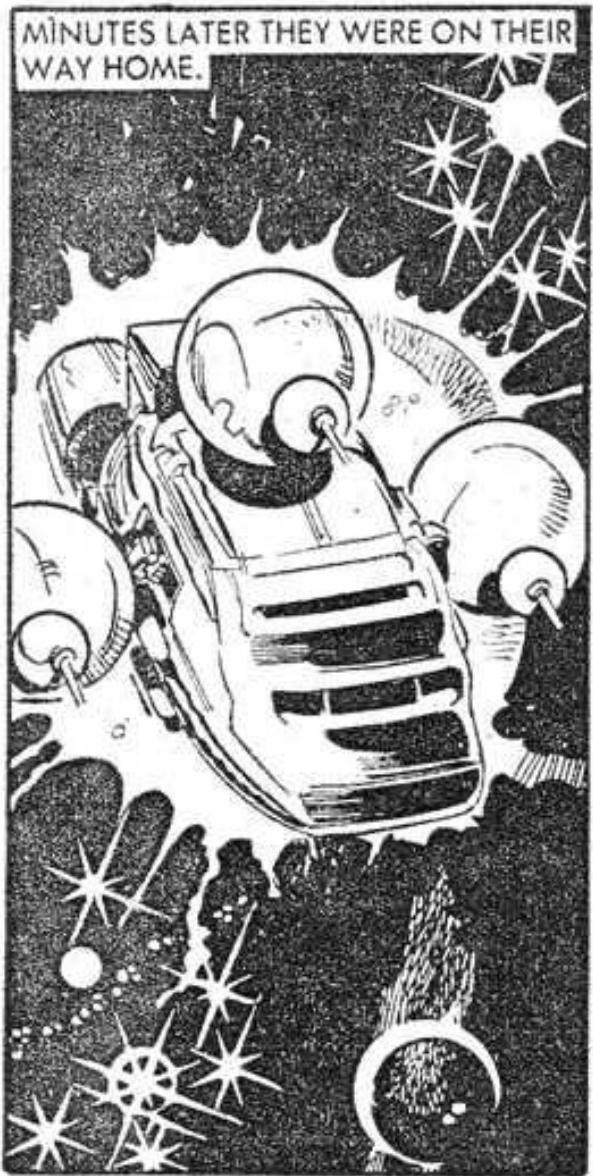
THE NAVIGATION LOG LAY IN SLIGE'S HAND AS THE CRAFT ROARED AWAY.

WE'RE STUCK WITH NO NAVLOG!

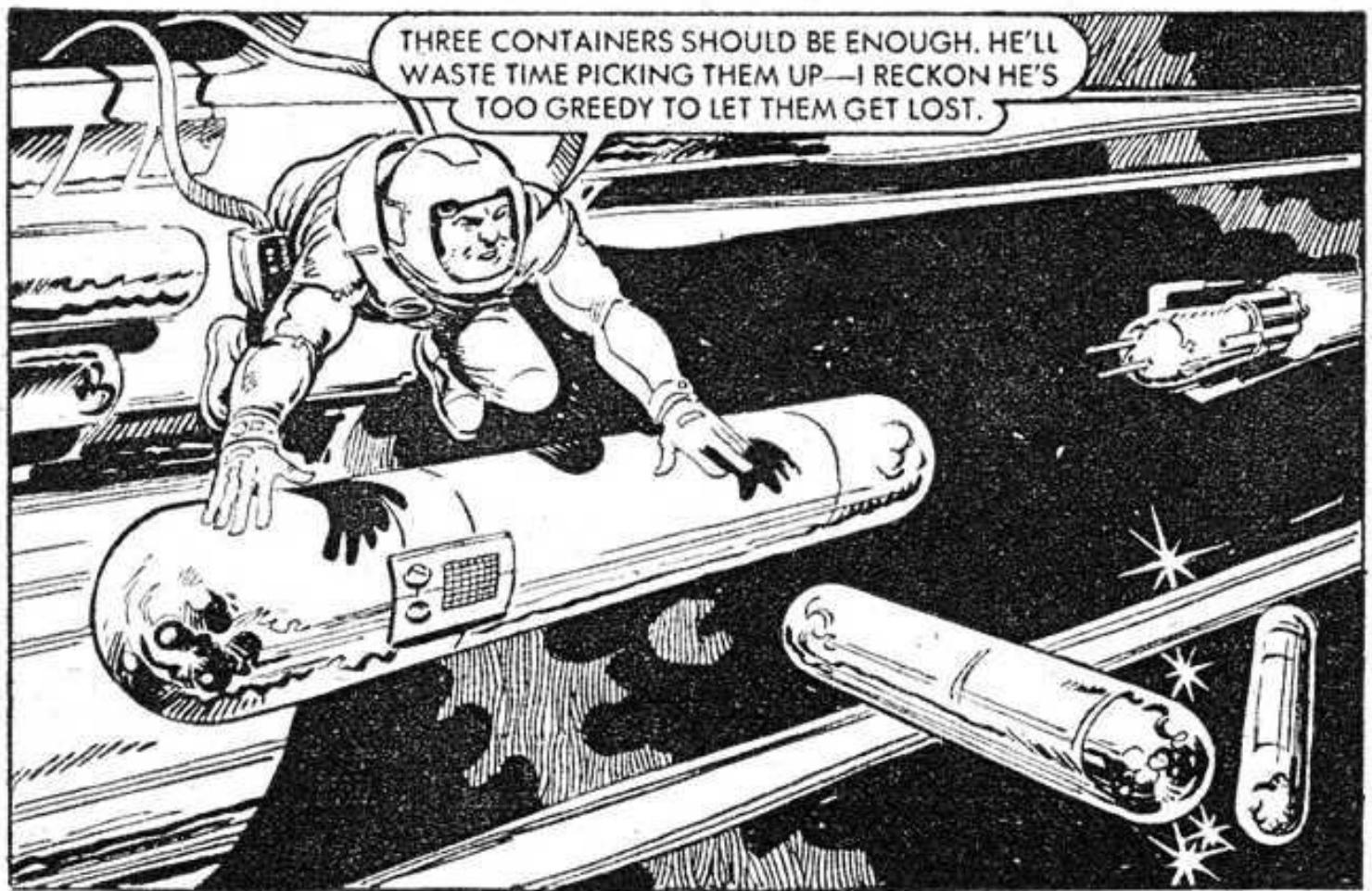
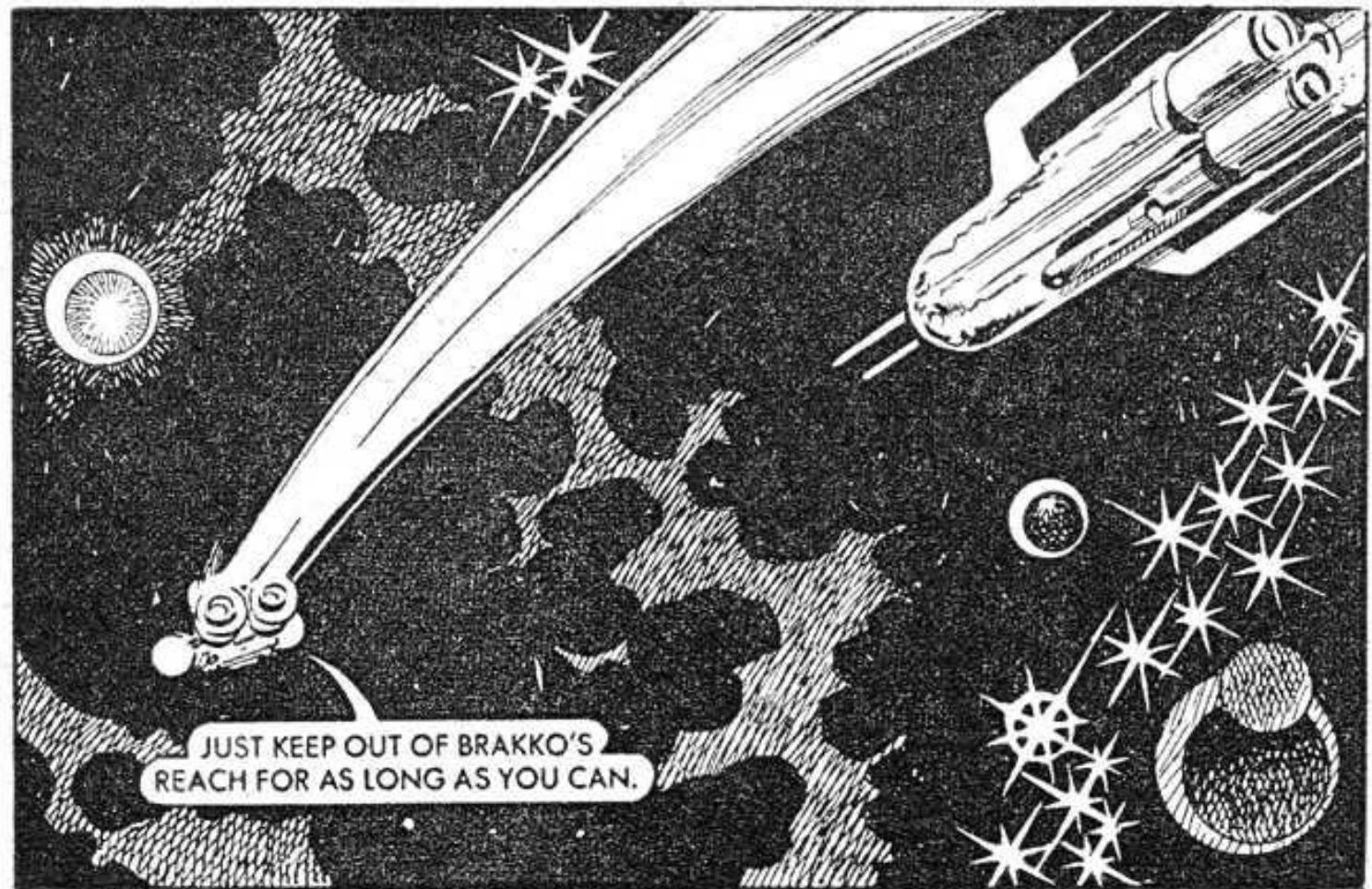
PUT THIS CRATE IN SPACE AND I'LL GET YOU HOME.











PICK THEM UP—WE'LL EASILY CATCH UP WITH THEM LATER.

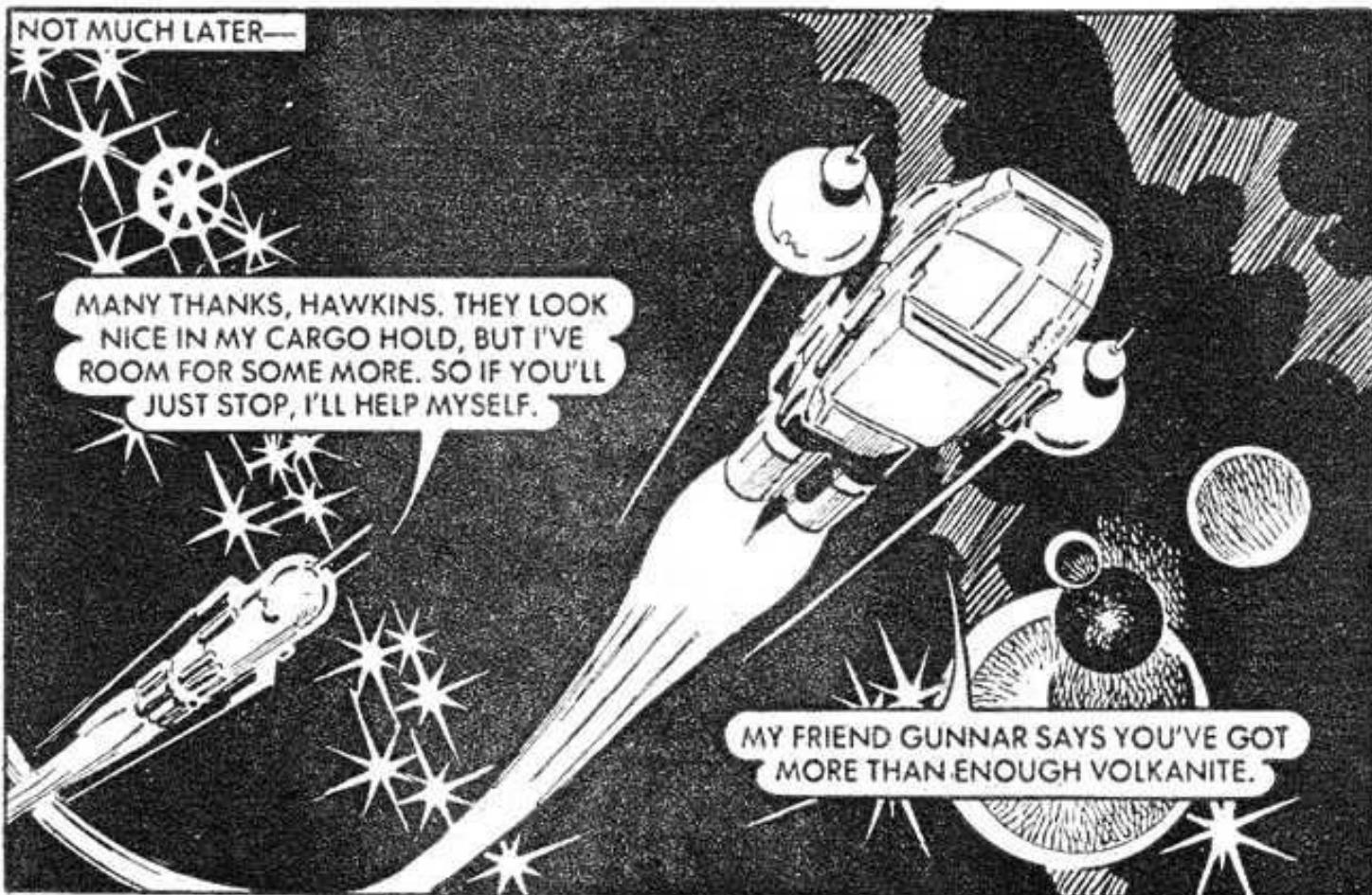
THEY'RE STUFFED FULL OF VOLKANITE.



NOT MUCH LATER—

MANY THANKS, HAWKINS. THEY LOOK NICE IN MY CARGO HOLD, BUT I'VE ROOM FOR SOME MORE. SO IF YOU'LL JUST STOP, I'LL HELP MYSELF.

MY FRIEND GUNNAR SAYS YOU'VE GOT MORE THAN ENOUGH VOLKANITE.



BRAKKO'S SHIP SUDDENLY SPLIT DOWN A HUNDRED SEAMS. ENGINES CRACKED AND FUEL BANKS SPEWED THEIR POWER INTO SPACE.

WHAT THE . . . ??



JUST WHAT DID YOU DO?

REMEMBER I TOLD YOU THOSE CONTAINERS WERE ATOMIC COMPRESSORS? WELL, I SET THE COMPRESSOR FIELDS TO SWITCH OFF. RESULT—THREE CONTAINERS SUDDENLY BECAME THE SIZE OF THIRTY IN A SHIP THAT CAN ONLY HOLD TEN!

YOU'VE WRECKED OUR ENGINES. WE CAN'T MOVE. HELP US, HAWKINS.

YOUR LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE INTACT . . . YOU'LL SURVIVE. GOODBYE, BRAKKO.



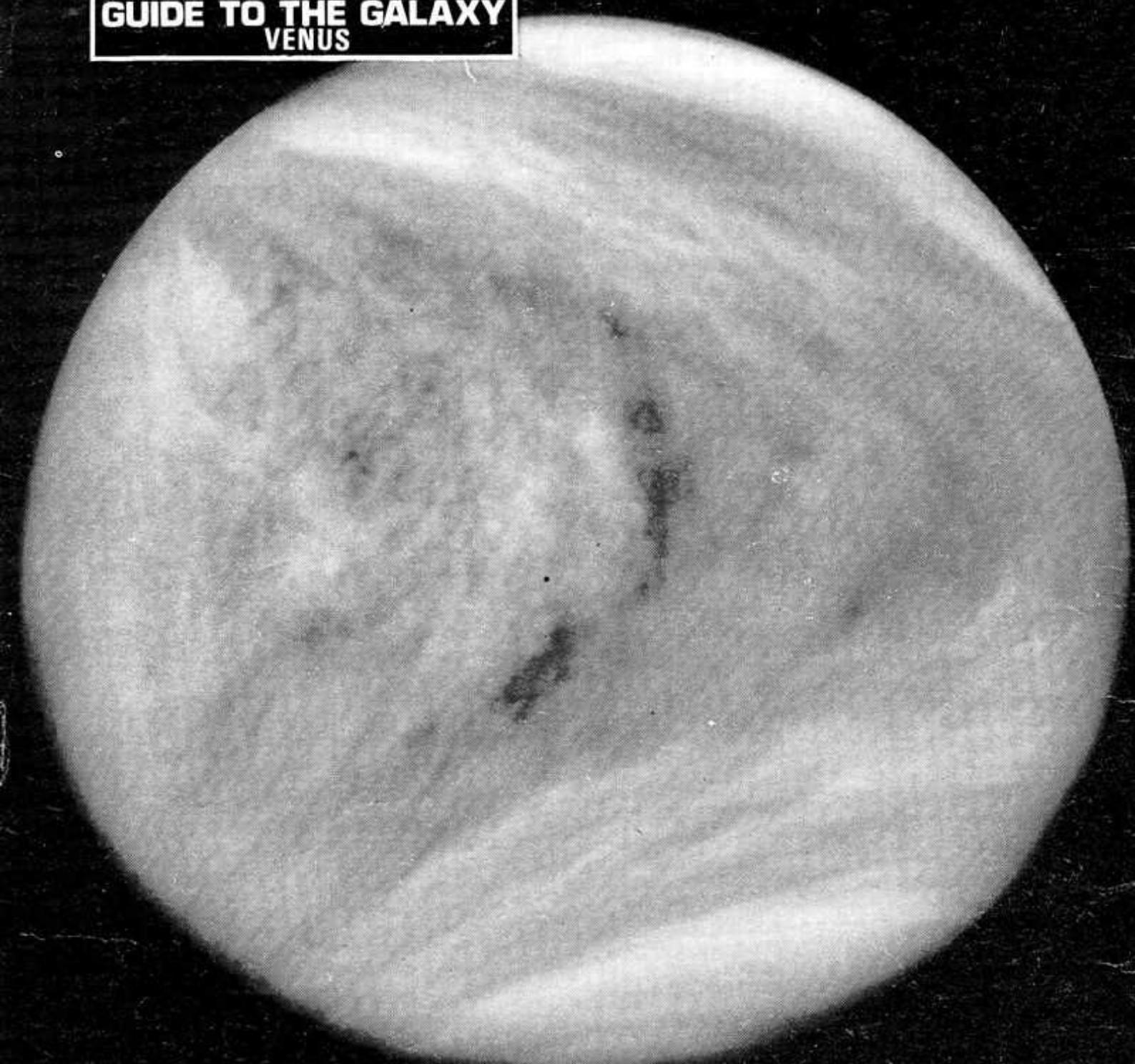
DON'T MISS THIS MONTH'S  
OTHER ACTION-PACKED  
ADVENTURE



NOW ON SALE

# **STARBLAZER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY**

**VENUS**



**VENUS**, next to the Moon is the brightest natural object in Earth's sky and is similar in size to Earth with a diameter of 7700 miles. Venera 1 flew past Earth's nearest planetary neighbour in early 1961, and since then has been the subject of many US and Russian probes. This photo, from a distance of 40,000 miles, was taken by the Pioneer Venus Orbiter in February 1979.